

1715

A

VISITATION
SERMON,

Preach'd at *Ipswich, &c.*



A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at a

Vifitation,

H E L D A T

I P S W I C H

I N

S U F F O L K.

B Y

THOMAS BRADSHAIGH, M. A.

Rector of Langham in Essex, and of Stratford in Suffolk, near Colchester.

L O N D O N :

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1715.

GENERAL

INSTRUCTIONS

FOR THE

NAVY

OFFICERS



AND

BY

JOHN BRADSHAW, ESQ.

OF THE

NAVY

OFFICE

1854

To the Right Reverend Father in
God, JOHN, Lord Bishop of
London.

TO THE
Right Honourable WILLIAM, Lord
Berkeley, of Stratton.

AND,
To Sir Roger Bradshaigh, Baronet.

TO express the grateful Sense, which I
retain, of the Obligations I lie under to
to you all respectively ; I chuse in general to
make you a tender of this inconsiderable Mite,
tho' I may thereby betray the poverty of my
Attainments.

To whom so proper to offer my First-Fruits
as to my Diocesan? As it was my happiness
to be bred up in that College, of which your
Lordship is so bright an Ornament, so a re-
markable Providence has propitiously placed
me under your Episcopal Care. Had my Lot
unluckily fallen without the Sphere of your Ju-
risdiction

The Dedication.

risdiction, yet the Dedication of this little Tract had been your Lordships undoubted Claim, not upon the account of its own Value, but your most excelling Worth, whose Candor is ready to Patronize all, even the weakest endeavours, that tend to the Vindication of the Christian Religion, and the Credit of the Church of England, and its regular Clergy.

And as to You, my Lord, can there be any to whom is more justly due, a return of my publick Acknowledgements, to whose Favour is owing the forementioned happy Relation? It is nothing but fit and decorous, that your Lordship should have the Fruit of his Labours, who enjoys the kind Effects of your Bounty. You, my Lord, are an exception to that Infidelity and Scoffing at Things and Persons sacred, which in the following Treatise, is but too justly charged upon this Generation. It were to be wished, that all were not only almost, but altogether such as your Lordship is, for the Exemplariness of your Life and steadiness in those Principles, upon which is built our most Holy Church.

And in discharging Debts of Gratitude, Can I with Equity be unmindful of him, whom so near Relation, and a very zealous care in attaining

The Dedication.

*attaining the Kindness of so worthy a Patron,
have combined to endear to me.*

*In the number of such true lovers of our
Church and Monarchy, as their Lordships are,
I dare place you Sir, in full confidence of their
Approbation.*

*I shall add no more, but beg your Acceptance
of this mean Offering, and that will be thought
a sufficient compensation for this ordinary Per-
formance, by,*

My LORD,

Your Lordship's most Dutiful,

and,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's Most Obliged Servant,

and,

SIR,

Your most Affectionate Brother,

Thomas Bradshaigh.

The Declaration

that the rights of the people are the rights of the people, and that the rights of the people are the rights of the people.

In the name of the people, we declare that the rights of the people are the rights of the people, and that the rights of the people are the rights of the people.

We declare that the rights of the people are the rights of the people, and that the rights of the people are the rights of the people.

Yours truly,

John F. Kennedy

Yours truly,

John F. Kennedy

and

218

Your most devoted friend,

John F. Kennedy



PSAL. LXXIII. xiii, xiv.

Verily I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my Hands in Innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued and chast'ned every Morning.



THESE Words are the result of a Serious Contemplation upon the Misfortunes of Good Men in this World, and the Prosperity of the Wicked: This seemingly unequal Dispensation of Providence, was a frequent Trouble and Offence to holy David, he Tragically complains in the beginning of this Psalm (2, 3, 4, 5.) that his Feet were almost gone, and his Steps had well nigh slipped, for he was envious at the foolish, when he saw the prosperity of the Wicked, for there are no Bands in their Death, but their Strength is firm; they are not in Trouble as other Men, neither are they plagued like other Men. This for some time lay very cross upon his Mind, and discomposed his reflecting Thoughts, his Heart (as he says) *was grieved, and he was pricked in his Reins,* (Verse 21.) Then was he desirous of finding out

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the meaning of these cross dealings with the Sons of Men, he employ'd his most solemn Thoughts upon this Theme, but cou'd not thereby remove his Doubts, nor dissipate his Scruples, *Then thought I, (says he, Verse 16.) to understand this, but it was too painful for me.* This was a difficulty which he could not for some time get over, until (as he says, Verse 17.) *he went into the Sanctuary of God,* then all his Scruples were wholly removed, his Understanding enlighten'd, and his Faith confirmed. But before, jealous apprehensions overspread his Soul, and Doubts had well nigh supplanted his Belief; he had in a manner made Shipwrack of his Faith, because he could not for some time account for this Dispensation by Reason, as appears by this desponding Inference in the Text, *Verily I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my Hands in Innocency, for all the day long have I been plagued and chast'ned every morning.*

In discoursing upon these Words I shall observe the following method.

I. I shall shew the unreasonableness in general of passing hasty and rash Verdicts upon the Dispensations of Providence, because at present we are not able to comprehend them. Which was the holy Psalmist's Case, as to the seeming unequal distinction between Virtuous and Bad Men, in the providential distributions of Good and Evil in this World, for he verily concluded that he had *cleansed his Heart in vain, and washed his Hands in Innocency*, because he could not at present account for this Dispensation of Providence.

II. I shall offer some Reasons in particular, to vindicate the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of the Divine Providence, in the instances of the Text, the Misfortunes of good Men in this World, and the Prosperity of the Wicked.

III. And lastly, I shall conclude with some Application suitable to this Time and Place.

And First, for the first, To shew the unreasonableness, &c.

One of the greatest achievements of our Study, is to let us into the Knowledge of the narrowness of our intellectual Views, the further Searches we make, the more visible appears the feebleness of our Sight; he that is not sensible of the weakness of Human Understanding, is one of the greatest Instances of it: For there are so many unexceptionable Proofs of this in things that daily occur to our Eyes, that we must of necessity either disbelieve the evidence of our Senses, or acknowledge the defect of our Reason. There is scarcely any product of Nature, tho' never so common and obvious, but what puzzles and baffles our Understandings in some Circumstance or other: To instance only in the attraction of the Load-stone, and the striking Fire out of a Flint; as to the first, we can give no Reason of the Virtue that is in it; nor as to the latter, conceive how such a mutual Collision should ingender Fire; were not these Effects visible to our Eyes, and obvious in Fact, we should have thought them as impossible, as they are now unaccountable.

And if we are so much nonplussed at the ordinary Phenomena in the natural World, can it be expected that we should be infallible or competent Judges of all the appearances in the Moral?

And first for those things that are matters of Revelation. If the most trifling Objects of Sense have something or other in them above the reach and capacity of the sagest Philosopher handsomly to unriddle, is it reasonable to conclude the Mysteries of our Faith absurd, because we are not able satisfactorily to explain all the difficulties contained in them?

Is it possible for God in the Works of Nature, to pose our Understandings? And must it be beyond his Power in the words of his Revelation, to impart Truths unto us, which we cannot comprehend? Must God have no reason for his Revelation, because there is none discernable to us? And must every thing be impossible, which we cannot presently adjust to the Axioms and Rules of Science and Philosophy?

How usual is it as we grow older and get greater Experience, to attain the knowledge of several things, which before were too abstruse for our less ripper Judgments? And others may possibly explain those Difficulties with ease, which we ourselves labour in vain to solve. So that our not clearly discovering as to the manner, is no reasonable Objection against our believing, as to the Thing. We can give no other account of God's manifestation of himself to the *Jews*, before the *Gentiles*, but purely his own good pleasure, because it seemed good in his Sight; yet we are informed, that he had good, tho' inscrutable Reason, for that seeming Partiality; for St. Paul and Barnabas,
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in their Discourse to the obstinate *Jews*, (*Acts* 13. 46.) tell them, that it was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to them. And so in all other Cases we may be sure that God always Acts upon Reason, tho' Transcending our Capacities sometimes to discry; if he cou'd not, the Creature would be as Wise as the Creator, and we should actually, what our first Parents fondly aspired to, be as Gods, having Understandings adequate to the full compass and extent of all Truth.

Besides it is a ridiculous thing not to be satisfied with less than either Comprehending all Mysteries, or believing none; for they wou'd cease to be Mysteries as soon as they became intelligible, nor wou'd there be any Scope for our Faith, nor any Merit, or Worth in our Belief, if the objects of it were plain and Demonstratively evident. Nay it may be warrantally affirmed, that the Mysteries of the Gospel cou'd not be expounded to us with effect as to the Nature and manner of them; not thro' any defect in God, but our own Incapacity to receive such Revelation; our Understandings are too narrow for so vast a Theory, we cannot bear it now, t'will be part of our Portion hereafter; we shall then Know, as we are known, and clearly see what we knew but in part before; our Belief will be superseded by Sight, and our Faith swallowed up of Vision. In the mean time it is sufficient to know whom we have believed; and this is not groundless credulity, believing we know not why, but rational Evidence, equal with Sense in regard of the certainty of the assent, our Faith relying upon the most sure Foundation, the immutable and eternal veracity of God; If he has
plainly

plainly and expressly said any thing it must be true, tho' it be beyond the Comprehension of our Reason. And this is so obvious to any reflecting Mind, that considering what unexceptionable proofs we have of the Divine Authority and Genuineness of the Holy Scriptures, I am induced to conclude, that the Gospel is not rejected, so much because the Mysteries of Faith are inexplicable, or the motives of our assent too weak for Free-thinkers ; but rather because the obligations to a holy Life are there too plain and indispensable for Free-Livers.

From the Revelations of God, pass we to the Operations of his Hands. And here how equally unreasonable is it presently to suspect the order, or disbelieve the being of a Providence, because we cannot in this Valley of darkness reconcile and adjust every Passage and particular Scene of it to the Laws of Reason and Equity ; for may not a Being who is infinitely Wise, do things just and right, tho' beyond our finite Apprehensions ? Or have we such an entire and comprehensive Prospect of the whole Series of God's Actions, and the mutual respects and Relations they bear to each other, as that none can possibly appear to us otherwise than as they really are. Whereas we see but as thro' a Glass darkly, and therefore can never View the length of his Designs, nor trace the secret springs and distant ends of his Providence ; by Reason of which it is almost impossible for us to form an infallible Judgment without a divine Revelation of the good or evil of any Event that befalls us ; for that which may appear evil to us, abstractly and singly considered, in conjunction with what went before, and the Effects and Consequences that Succeed, it may be a most illustrious instance of the divine Justice or Good-

Goodness towards us ; and therefore since it is impossible for us to discern all the connections and tendencies of God's Actions, the full Comprehension of which is absolutely necessary to render us competent Judges of his Providence, how unreasonable is it for us to censure at random and arraign that conduct which we don't understand ? Much more Magisterially to pronounce all to be the effect of blind Chance and Fortune, which we cannot reconcile to infinite Wisdom. For we are assured of God in general, that tho' Clouds and Darkness are sometimes round about him and his Judgments often like the great deep, Fathomless, Unsearchable, and past finding out, yet that Righteousness and True Judgment are always the Habitation of his Seat ; they are so ; and it is impossible they should be otherwise, for he must cease to be God, before he can act contrary to these essential Excellencies, these his antient Glories ; notwithstanding his Power is infinite ; for it is only in a good Sense so ; he cannot possibly do any thing that is in any wise contrary to the strictest Wisdom, Holiness, Goodness, Truth, Justice, and Mercy, and such like. And this without any Derogation from his Power, which indeed tho' circumscribed within these Bounds, is nevertheless Omnipotent in its proper Sphere of Action, being limited by no other measures, than those that are consistent with the united Harmony of all these Perfections ; if he cou'd swerve from any of these, 'twou'd rather be an instance of Weakness, than an Argument of Power in him, which we cannot attribute to him, without divesting him of his God-Head.

And

And this is a rational Foundation for our believing the equity of all his Dispensations in general, tho' we may be ignorant how to justify some Phenomena in particular. Let us then suspend our Judgments till we come into the other World, where we shall, with the beauty of God's Face, behold that of his Providence, see all the intricacies of it laid open and unravell'd, and every thing unfolded and made plain to our Understandings, which now seems so Mysterious to us. And then I am sure we shall see cause enough for ever to admire and adore that Wisdom, which we now cannot comprehend; and clearly discern that all the seeming Inequalities were not instances of any Defect in Him, but in our selves, were not any objections to the evenness of his Conduct, but so many Arguments of the shortness of our dim Reason. Therefore whatsoever Dispensations we cannot Fathom, let us not argue thus foolishly, this is not to be comprehended by Reason, and this we cannot reconcile to the Divine Perfections: Therefore, the one ought not to be believed by us, nor the other to be imputed to God, but most conclusively thus, This is the Word of the Lord, and that the Operation of his Hands: Therefore, the one cannot but be True and the other Holy, Just and Good, tho' we are not able in a scientific way to account for the manner or reasonableness of either.

But we need not build our Faith upon such an implicit, tho' solid Foundation, in relation to the Misfortunes of good Men in this World, and the Prosperity of the Wicked; there being sufficient Reasons assignable to clear Providence of these Allegations: Which leads me to the

Second Particular, to offer some Reasons to vindicate the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness, of the Divine Providence, as to the Misfortunes of good Men in this World, and the Prosperity of the Wicked.

And if I should here in general reply to this matter, that God's absolute Dominion over us, as we are his Creatures, and Sovereign Right to dispose of all things at Pleasure, render all his Actions just beyond exception; this would be a sufficient Answer to this and all other Cavils whatsoever.

But tho' God may by Virtue of this Right, justly do whatsoever he pleases, and consequently we could have no just cause to murmur or complain; (for is it not lawful for him to do what he will with his own?) Yet 'tis not his method to deal with us after so rigorous and arbitrary a manner. We need not have recourse to his Sovereignty, to vindicate his Conduct in the Instances before us; there is a perfect harmony between this Order of his Providence, and the Divine Attributes of his Nature.

But before I strictly enter upon this Matter, I shall desire it to be consider'd, whether those wicked Men are really happy, who are seemingly so to us; and whether those upon whom Providence seems to frown, and whom we take to be good Men, are sincerely such. As to the first, we generally view them at a Distance, and thence the numerous train of Cares and Troubles, of Sorrows and Anxieties, which usually attend Riches, like the Rays of a too distant Object, escape our Observation. Or if we take a nearer view of them, it is for the most part on that side of their Condition, which affords

the fairest Prospect, that affects us most, and strikes upon our Senses with the greatest influence, and so engrosses our wondering Attention, that we never see those Troubles that may lie behind. Or, if we Survey them on every side, we commonly look no further than the surface, view only the Superficies of their Condition; and thence discern not what a Heart they may have under this fair and glittering outside, who like painted Sepulchres, may make a gaudy appearance, and be within nothing but Ghastliness and Gloominess. Nay, tho' we shou'd be as curious in prying into their inward Circumstances as possible, yet we might still be unacquainted with their Troubles, and strangers to their Distresses. Many private Grievs and Sorrows may be in the Breast of him, who carries a smiling Countenance; and if we cou'd but look into the Hearts of a great many gay and prosperous Sinners, we should, I don't question, be so far from admiring and applauding their Condition, that we should think them Objects worthy of our real Compassion and Pity. And as to the latter, we may mistake bad Men for good; many may make great shew of Piety without, and have very little sense of Religion within; a Sanctified Countenance is no infallible Token of an Upright Heart; nay, it often happens that the greatest pretenders to Godliness, are the least acquainted with the Power thereof; and that those that have the most of Grace and Sanctification in their Mouths, frequently have a smaller share of either, than other Men in their Practices. We have Instances of this in the late unhappy Times; Men who pretended to the greatest niceness of Conscience, and outwardly appear'd the demurest of Saints, and yet made no scruple

scruple to do those things, nay, gloried in them, whereof, to say no worse, they ought to have been ashamed.

And certainly the Race of them is not worn out in these our Days; an ill-contrived Look, and a whining, sighing, and canting Tone is, I am afraid, the whole of some Men's Godliness: Take but away these grimaces of Religion, and thou shalt find none. Now, when it is so common for Men to make such Demure Pretences to Holiness, when they have the least in reality, we who cannot see into their Hearts, may often mistake this dissembled Piety, for solid Worth; but God, who knows all the Secrets of the Breast, discerns the Hypocrisy, and often visits such Dissemblers with the Rod of his Vengeance, who by their feigned Sanctity, pass with us for Righteous.

But suppose the Wicked as Happy, and the other as Righteous as they appear, yet nothing can be inferred from the Prosperity of the one, or the Adversity of the other, prejudicial either unto the Wisdom, Justice, or Goodness of God.

This is not the place for the open execution of Justice the exact adjustment of things is adjourned to another Tribunal, where every one will receive a reward proportionable to his deserts. The Wicked for their Wages will reap the Vengeance of eternal Fire, and the Righteous the Love of God, and everlasting Happiness. But I shall shew you even as to this World, that both the Misfortunes of good Men, and the Prosperity of the Wicked, are fairly consistent with the foregoing Attributes of God. And first for the Wisdom of God. This unequal state of Things, wherein Prosperity and Adversity are promiscuously distributed, Vice often flourish-

rishing Triumphantly, and Virtue frequently being harrassed and oppressed; this unequal State, I say, is absolutely necessary, and better than an exact distinction between good and bad Men wou'd be in the distribution of Rewards and Punishments. For should Providence always be propitious to good Men, and instantly punish every Offender in the very act of Disobedience, the certain prospect of such Occurrences, wou'd very much supercede our Faith, and determine our Will, and make Men Religious more out of Necessity, than a principle of free Choice. For, as there cou'd be no room for our Faith upon so visible a display of a God above, and consequently no Virtue or Excellency in the belief of him, so likewise Men wou'd not dare to be Wicked, upon the dread of having some speedy Vengeance poured down upon them: And thereupon there wou'd be no excellency in their Piety and Virtue, as resulting from an irresistible Fear, and not from a principle of Sincerity and Duty. So that this Dispensation is absolutely necessary in this state of Trial and Probation, where our Obedience must be a Free-will Offering, and an instance of Virtue in us.

2ly. As to the Justice of God. And first in respect to the Misfortunes of good Men in this World. There can be no injustice in God, in withholding from us the good Things of this Life, if there be no Merit in us. And how can we equitably claim any thing as due upon the score of the worth and value of our most excellent Performances, when all that we have, all that we are, is his by eternal right of Creation; our best and most holy endeavours have some mixture and alloy of evil; and when we have done our utmost, we are so far from
meriting

meriting a Reward, that we must acknowledge ourselves unprofitable Servants, and to stand in need Grace and Favour. And shall Offenders complain for the Punishment of their Sins? Are the greatest Calamities that befall us here, fit to be put into the Ballance with the numberless Transgressions which the best of us commit against the Author of our Beings, and the preserver of our Lives? No we must acknowledge that he has punished us much less than our Iniquities deserved, and if we have our Beings, tho' no comforts of Life besides, we are under an obligation to God, But he is no Debtor to us.

(2.) As to the Justice of God in respect to the Prosperity of the Wicked.

The Iniquities of Men shall not finally pass unpunished, tho' at present they may meet with Forbearance, for God is only suspending the Effects of his Displeasure, and deferring Vengeance for a Season; an Account of which the Holy Scriptures give us, the Lord will take Vengeance on his Adversaries and reserveth Wrath for his Enemies; he will shew his Anger, and make his Power known, after he hath endured with much long-suffering the Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction. God is never the less angry, for not presently displaying his Righteous Judgments; he cannot behold Iniquity with any degree of approbation, and will certainly punish it at one time or another, and when he will do this, we ought in all Reason to leave to his Infinite Wisdom to determine. If he does not inflict Punishment as soon as there are Objects worthy of them, yet this can be no reflection upon his Justice, because he knows when is the most proper time to do it, and the greatest interval of impunity may

may be more than made up by the greatness of the Punishment.

We have sometimes known very old and prosperous Sinners overtaken at long run with some heavy Vengeance, usually the further Compass God takes, the heavier falls his Stroke at last: So that if we will but tarry the Lord's leisure, he will most surely display his Justice at one time or another to the punishment of Evil-doers; if he suspends his Blow during the time of this Life, he will not fail to execute the Torments of Hell upon them in another World.

3dly. As to the Goodness of God. And first, with respect to the Misfortunes of good Men in this World. The Troubles and Afflictions which God lays upon good Men here, are so far from arguing any Diskindness or Anger to them, that they are very high Instances of his peculiar Kindness and Love towards them. This at first hearing may seem a Paradox, and to carry in it a very surprizing sound. What! that God should lay Afflictions and Calamities upon good Men, which seem to be tokens and expressions of his Enmity and Aversion, and yet this out of the abundance of his Love and Goodness.

But this will appear intelligible Divinity, if we consider, that tho' Afflictions abstractly and in their own Nature considered, are not good, as rendering us miserable while we are under the heavy pressure of them; yet they may be so relatively, and in regard of their significancy and effect, and never fail to be so, when God lays them upon good Men. *All things shall work together for good, to them that love God; (Rom. 8. 28.)* Even their Afflictions shall conspire to advance their Interest, and promote their

their Felicity. If God should gratify the Appetites of his Children with unmix'd Prosperity, it would be a cruel Kindness to them, and they would reap more Damage than Benefit by such a fond Indulgence. The kind Aspects of the World, and the blandishments and insinuations of Prosperity are apt to enamour the best of Men, and allure them from their Duty. *Before I was afflicted* (says holy *David*) that is, when I lived in an uninterrupted calm of Prosperity, *I went astray*, Psal. 119, 67.) And therefore it is God's Care and Love to good Men, not to accommodate all Events to their Humours and Desires, He rather in meer Kindness to them, sometimes prescribes bitter Potions, to secure or advance that Health, which the lusciousness of Prosperity wou'd otherwise impair, and kindly molests their dangerous and treacherous Repose, with some cleaving Afflictions, in order to rouze and awaken them to a better sense of their Duty, lest by a long stream of Felicity, they forget him, who is the source and origin of all that Happiness. This is what we are assured of by exprefs Revelation: For these Chastisements (says the Apostle, *Heb. 12. 11.*) tho' they are not *joyous, but grievous, yet are they designed for the bringing forth the peaceable fruits of Righteousness in all them that are exercised thereby*; and consequently are the effects of God's Love, proceeding from a tender regard of their future well-being; as when we see a kind and indulgent Father, chast'ning his Favourite Infant, his strokes cannot be interpreted as the effects of his Aversion, but as so many Tokens of the passionate concern he hath of its future Happiness and Welfare.

And

And we are told (*Rev. 3. 19.*) that *as many as God loves, he rebukes and chastens*: And the holy Psalmist lays it down as a certain Conclusion, and gives it us upon his own Experience, *I know, O Lord, (says he, Psal. 119. 75.) that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.* The Furnace of Affliction being intended not to consume, but to refine and purifie good Men from their Earthly Drossiness and Pollution, to perfect and consecrate them thro' Suffering, to improve their Graces, and exercise their Faith and Patience, to brighten their Virtues here, in order to qualifie them for a more ample portion of God's Kindness, and a fuller display of his Love hereafter. These *light Afflictions*, (as the Apostle says, *2 Cor. 4. 17.*) *which are but for a moment, will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*

This is the worst that God designs them in every Adversity; this the great scope and intendment of all the punishments he inflicts on good Men; He is self-sufficient, and so neither receives nor proposes any Advantage from their Afflictions, and such is the goodness and benignity of his Nature, as will not permit him to lay them on them meerly out of design to gratify his Pleasure, or for Affliction sake; for we are told, (*Lam. 3. 33.*) that *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men.* And therefore whenever he reacheth out to good Men a bitter Cup, since he cannot do it upon any selfish View, or mercenary Prospect, we may with all possible assurance conclude, that the Ingredients of it are Medicinal, and in order to a more important good of the Patients; and tho' the Draught may, like Wormwood, be unpallatable, yet wholsom and proper for Health, and such as
their

their Circumstances and Infirmities require. And I think setting aside the assistance of all other considerations, there can be no more pretence or reason for entertaining any hard or dishonourable Thoughts of God upon this account, than for reviling a skilful Physician for incommoding us at present, and applying a severe Remedy in order to our Health and Safety. Thus you see the condition of good Men under the worst Circumstances, is fairly consistent with God's Goodness. And Secondly, the Prosperity of the Wicked is as reconcilable to his hatred of Sin, and the essential Sanctity of his Divine Nature.

God's original and primary Design in giving us Being at first, was in order to make us eternally happy at last; and all his subsequent Acts tend to this End; he desires not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he should turn from the error of his ways; and to that purpose he makes use of all the means that are likely to reclaim us and bring us back into the ways of Salvation. When harsher Methods prove ineffectual, then he makes use of soft and gentler ways, and tries to gain us by Kindness and Endearments. This we are told by *St. Paul*, the *Goodness and long-suffering of God*, (says he, *Rom. 2. 4.*) *is to lead us to Repentance*: And in another place, that Chastisements are designed for the *bringing forth the peaceable fruits of Righteousness in all them that are exercised thereby*, *Heb. 12. 11.* This is the Errand upon which Prosperity and Adversity in their successive changes are sent: And when God has try'd these different arts of Discipline and Love, and Men remain stubborn and refractory, in defiance both of his Mercies and Judgments, he at last, no hopes of Reformation appearing, consigns them

over to their own Wills, and abandons them to their own Ease and Luxury, and consequently Ruin; for says the holy Psalmist, *Psal. 92. 7. When the wicked spring as the Grass, and all the workers of Iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.* It signifies that God thinks them not worthy his Correction or future regard. And can there be a greater token of aversion to Vice, and persevering Wickedness, than this All-wise Physician ceasing his Administration, and leaving them in the entire possession and Power of the Devil, to be hurried at his pleasure from one Wickedness to another, and finally into Perdition.

And some of those probably are under these Circumstances, who are so usually the Objects of our Envy; God out of a just resentment of the abuse of his Mercies, may have withdrawn his Care of them, and given them up to their own ways, to the filling up the Measures of their Sins, and *treasuring up Wrath against the day of Wrath*, that being ripe for Perdition, and richly deserving Vengeance, they may fall more proper Victims to Divine Severity at the last Day; in which God's Justice and Righteousness will be display'd, to the full satisfaction of all good Men, and the eternal Condemnation of all bad Men, *The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Fire, and the Righteous into Life eternal; and then shall ye return and discern between the Righteous and the Wicked, between him that served God, and him that served him not, Mal. 3. 18.*

I come now in the

3d. and last Place to conclude with some Application from the latter part of my Discourse, suitable to this Time and Place.

Let

Let what has been said, be a mighty encouragement to us to be very diligent and faithful in the discharge of our Ministry, whatever cross Usages, or ill Treatment we may meet with in the World for our Pains; the Reward is sufficient to make us abundant Recompence at last, and God's assistance is extraordinary to give us an ample support under them at present. We are fallen indeed into a very degenerate Age, an Age in which it is almost a Crime to be Vertuous, the least Air of Religion is look'd upon as Singular and Unfashionable, and our very Habits, which are the distinguishing Badges of our Function, and bespeak our relation to God and Holy Things, are become means of exposing us to the Insolencies and Abuses of wicked Men, even but of too many of those who shou'd be Examples and Precedents of good Manners to the rest of Mankind. There is scarce a little vain Thing, that has but attained the Sciences of Dressing finely, and giving himself fantastical Airs, but presently bends his fancy to ridicule and despitefully use us; Libertines and Drunkards make Songs upon us, and every thing is thought Wit that is but Prophane. Yet tho' we are troubled on every side, let us not be dismayed or cast down; nay, it is rather a confirmation of our Faith, that there are Scoffers walking after their own ungodly Lusts, verifying the Predictions of the Gospel, that there should arise such in the latter Days. And it ought to be matter of Joy and Consolation that we fall into Tribulations, which are a conformity to Christ, and they which tread in the Reproachful Steps of their Redeemer, and suffer for him here, shall reign with him hereafter, in that Day when Wisdom shall be justified of all her Children; for

then shall the Righteous Man stand in great Boldness before the Face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his Labours. And they shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in Derision and a Proverb of Reproach; we Fools counted his Life Madness and his End to be without Honour: How is he numbred among the Children of God, and his, Lot is among the Saints!

Our great High-Priest himself God blessed for ever, the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the expresse Image and Resemblance of his Person, cou'd not escape Ignominy and Disgrace. His whole Life was one continued Act of doing Good, and the adequate performance of the whole Will of God; yet all his gracious Offices were traduced, bad Constructions, and sinister Interpretations were put upon them, and he himself stigmatiz'd with the odious Character of an Impostor, a Wine-bibber, and a Glutton.

And the Apostles, who trod in his Steps, shared in his Fate, they underwent the like Reproaches and hard Usage which their Master had born before them. Let it therefore be no discouragement to us, if we meet with the same Grievances, in the Discharge of our Ministry, for the Servant is not above his Lord; nor let us think it hard that we meet with Briars in the way, when the Path is the Road that leads to Glory. Neither is it any just Reflection upon us to be contemned and ill-treated, but to deserve to be so. And if to be of the purest Church in the World, and famous for universal Leaning to all the Nations round about us; if to promote the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls, be matter of Disparagement, God grant that we may all our Lives long continue
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under this Ignominy, and at last dye under this Disgrace, those that account this vile, their commendations and good Word would be our greatest Reproach. Thanks be to God that we of this Church, of which it is my Happiness to be a Member, and my Glory to be a Priest, a Church the most Apostolical in its Government, and Primitive in its Doctrine and Worship, I say that we can truly with *St. Paul* magnifie our Office and justly boast of a Clergy, who have been as eminent for their profound Learning, as renouned for the Sanctity of their Lives, and the unwearied Activity of their zeal for God and the good of Souls, as any Church in the whole World can boast of.

And God be praised our Church abounds now with those of the same Character, who for their true and unaffected Piety and Virtue, equal if not exceed their Predecessors; who for their profound Science in Learning and Religion, have not their equals under the Cope of Heaven; Witness those many excellent and Godly Discourses that are extant in Print, and are so many standing Monuments of Shame and Condemnation to the giddy senseless Crew of our Dissenters, who have the Face to alledge this as one of their silly Reasons, for abandoning the Church, because they have better and more edifying and Soul saving Preaching in an illiterate Conventicle.

And we have daily such Eminent and Wholsom Streams flowing from our Fountains of Learning, that their remains no present Fears, but that we shall rather reflect a Lustre on that Character already Establish'd, than diminish ought from it, notwithstanding the Jealous, tho' groundless, apprehensions of a late unwary Preface. We may I think

think with truth affirm, That we need not the addition of the Learning of any of our Northren Neighbours to make our Church illustrious at Home, or Glorious Abroad. There is not the least appearance of Suspition but that we shall be able to stop the Mouths of Gainsayers, and all those that have evil will at our *Sion*; I cou'd not but with surprize observe the anxious concern of that late Prelate, least we shou'd not be able to answer the feeble efforts of Modern Conformity, I always thought that one of the heaviest Crimes and Charges against us, was, that we bore too hard upon our Dissenting Brethren, and made their Schism too visible. and indeed so small a pittance of Learning is in their Possession, that had they Truth it self on their Side, they wou'd be incompetent Defenders of it, but a bad Cause and weak Advocates must needs produce a suitable Vindication. Whatever Apprehensions we may have from the Memory of past Transactions, and the Sense of their present restless Tempers, we need never fear that they will do us any harm with their Arguments. It must be owned, neither am I carefull to conceal it, that some among us, may not be so abundantly qualified for the Ministry as it were to be wished, but then this is owing to their natural Incapacity, and not to any Fault in the University Education, and it is something strange that their lots shou'd all happen to fall in the same ground, for we hear of no such general complaint from any other Quarter. Besides in the examination of Youth, allowances ought to be made, it is not Reasonable to expect from the Years of Three or four and Twenty, the improvements and experience of Seventy. I will not say, but I am afraid, there is not so much

Truth

Truth in that Deposition, as Design, to cast a Blemish upon the Clergy and Universities of the Church of *England*, and raise the Reputation of Fanatical Accademies.

Neither am I solicitous to conceal that popular Clamour against our Church, of several of the Priesthood living unsuitably to their High Calling. Notwithstanding there may be such, yet this is no reasonable Plea for Separation, for the Virtue and Efficacy of the Sacraments don't depend upon the goodness or badness of him that Administers; and indeed it wou'd be very strange, if among so great a Number, of which the Body of the Clergy consists, their were not a few discrediting exceptions: The Apostles were but twelve in number, and yet one was a Traytor, and another deny'd his Lord and Master, and yet this was no just aspersion of of the Apostleship, nor ought the blemishes of a few Persons among us, be any reflection upon the Order; as long as we are Flesh and Blood, we must be Subject to the Infirmities of them.

But indeed how exemplary soever we behave our selves, we cannot escape the sharp Arrows, even bitter Words of a Degenerate Age, Men will find something, how unjust soever to object against us, where there is no blot, they will endeavour to make one, every little Infirmary must be aggravated with the most heinous Circumstances, rather than they will want an occasion of reviling us. We must suspend even the necessary Actions of Life, if we will not run the hazard of having ill-natur'd Descants, and malicious Glosses made upon us.

Many Eyes are upon us, not to imitate our Examples, but watching for our Haltings: Men
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be ready to take advantage of every slip we make,
 nay, of the least appearances of one, so maliciously
 are they set against us. But thus they per-
 secuted our Lord and his Apostles that were be-
 fore us: And if they drank so deeply of the
 Cup in the way, it is nothing but reasonable that
 we should possess our Souls in patience under bad
 Usages and ill Treatment, for these are no Tokens
 of our Abdication, but rather Badges and Eviden-
 ces of our Sonship; *And if Sons, then heirs of God,*
and joint-heirs with Christ, of the inheritance of
 that Glory with which the Sufferings of this present
 World are not worthy to be compared: Which
 whatever Grievances and Sufferings we may meet
 with here, tho' our Persecutors be Persecuted with all
 the Ignominy imaginable, and tho' all the Day
 long we be plagued with the Gain-sayings and Con-
 tradictions of Sinners, will very satisfactorily con-
 vince us, that we have not cleansed our Hearts in
 vain, nor washed our Hands to no purpose in In-
 nocency.

Wherefore my Beloved Brethren, having this
 comfortable Hope in us, *Let us be steadfast, immova-*
ble, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foras-
much as we know that our labour is not in vain in the
Lord.

Now, To God, &c.

F I N I S.